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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 000274

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STATE FOR AF/W
STATE FOR INR/AA
DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST PERSPECTIVE ON THE PRESIDENTIAL RACE,
PART II

REF: LAGOS 271

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) Summary: A visit to the Southeast states of Ebonyi, Abia, and Imo on March 28-29 showed the essential presidential calculation had not changed. People's Democratic Party (PDP) candidate Umaru Yar'Adua was expected to win all five states in the presidential vote. However, People's Progressive Alliance (PPA) candidate Orji Kalu and All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) candidate Muhammadu Buhari had gained some support and momentum. All three candidates sought to benefit from the weakness of All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) candidate Dim Chukwuemeka Ojukwu and the possible exclusion of Action Congress (AC) candidate Atiku Abubakar. End summary.

Yar'Adua Expected to Win, As Igbos Wait Their Turn

12. (C) Our interlocutors expected the vote in the Southeast to go to People's Democratic Party (PDP) Umaru Yar'Adua. Uche Nwosu, Abia Correspondent for the Daily Independent, said people were unhappy there was no major Igbo candidate. While some people supported All Nigerian People's Party (ANPP) candidate Muhammadu Buhari, they saw Yar'Adua as the winner and Abia wanted to support the winner, Nwosu commented.

13. (C) Ben Duru, Imo State Correspondent for the Daily Independent, said the Southeast would support the PDP because Vice-Presidential candidate Goodluck Jonathan is from nearby Bayelsa. The Igbo thinking was to support Yar'Adua and wait for their turn at the presidency, Duru explained.

Buhari Weak, but Seen As the Main Alternative

¶4. (C) Buhari's support is expected to vary in the Southeast states, depending on the strength of the ANPP's gubernatorial candidates in the various states. Nwosu thought Buhari would win votes based on the strength of ANPP Abia gubernatorial candidate Ikechi Emenike and Anambra gubernatorial candidate Nicholas Ukachukwu. Nwosu commented that Buhari's running mate Edwin Ume-Ezeoke had little appeal in the Southeast, especially compared to Action Congress (AC) candidate Atiku Abubakar's choice of Anambra Senator Ben Obi. Uka commented that Buhari has very little support in Ebonyi state, and appeared weaker than People's Progressive Alliance candidate (PPA) Orji Kalu or Yar'Adua.

¶5. (C) A few Igbos saw Buhari as the candidate to fight the corruption. Vincent Ude-Umanata, Ebonyi State Director of Administration for the PDP Campaign for Governor and President Headquarters, despite his title favored Buhari over Yar'Adua. Ude-Umanata told Poloff that as Obasanjo became too self-absorbed and manipulative, hopes were dashed for good governance. Buhari could solve corruption based on his antecedents, Ude-Umanata felt.

Kalu Sees Momentum, but Concerns
About His Tenure Persist

¶6. (C) Opinions differed widely on the chances of the colorful and brash Kalu. Kalu has launched an aggressive radio and media campaign in the Southeast, and his advertisements and news stories were a constant on radio stations in the Southeast. Kalu partisans insist they have the organizational strength to win in the Southeast and certainly in Kalu's home state of Abia. Kalu's strategists sought to present him as the Igbo candidate, at the expense of All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) candidate Dim

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Chukwuemeka Ojukwu. Felix Uka, Ebonyi State Correspondent for the Daily Independent, commented that Kalu had surpassed Ojukwu as the most popular Igbo political figure. Uka went so far to predict that in a free and fair election, Kalu would win Ebonyi.

¶7. (C) However, Kalu may find trouble winning in his home state or elsewhere. Nwosu, no fan of the Governor, remarked Abia residents were so unhappy with Kalu they would not support his presidential bid in sufficient numbers to ensure he would win the state. This opinion was echoed in neighboring Imo State. Ben Duru, Imo Correspondent for the Daily Independent, said Kalu had no chance as he had been hurt by his poor performance as Governor. According to Duru, Igbos did not see what Kalu accomplished in Abia, and while they supported an Igbo president Kalu was the wrong candidate. (Comment: Kalu knows he has no serious chance of winning. He is positioning himself for two possibilities--one immediate, the other more remote. The first is the possibility of a run-off. If so, Kalu could be a decisive player if he can show that the Igbo vote belongs to him. The more remote is that he wants to position himself as the pre-eminent Igbo politician in contemplation of when the presidency will return to the South either four or eight years from now. End comment)

Ojukwu Considered Too Old and His Party Weakened

¶8. (C) The other main Igbo option, APGA candidate Dim Chukwuemeka Ojukwu, was given little chance by our interlocutors. People saw Ojukwu as too old and enfeebled now. The once bright fire has dwindled to a smolder. Some observers commented that Ojukwu simply had not made himself visible. APGA, which has always considered it the Igbo party, seemed to also have seen the momentum from Kalu's PPA. Tony Okah, APGA gubernatorial candidate in Ebonyi,

complained to Poloff the Igbo were speaking with two voices, PPA and APGA. Kalu, Okah argued, should work with state APGA organizations.

Atiku Has Strength in the Southeast,
If He Can Get on the Ballot

¶9. (C) Atiku, if he could get on the ballot, has strength in both Anambra and Imo states.

Utomi Seen as Having Little Chance

¶10. (C) Pat Utomi, presidential candidate of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), was not expected to do well in the Southeast. Duru said Utomi had no chance to pick up significant votes in the Southeast. As the biased AC Anambra State Chairman Ndubisi Nwobu put it, "people will not want to waste their vote for Utomi".

Comment

¶11. (C) Our observers' prediction that the Southeast would go for Yar'Adua accords with Post's analysis. The PDP dominates the Southeast. Buhari has little organizational structure or personal appeal in this region. In a free and fair election with Atiku on the ballot, the Southeast would probably be competitive between Yar'Adua and Atiku. If Atiku is excluded, Yar'Adua will likely win all the Southeastern states with the possible exception of Abia. In Abia, Governor Kalu's PPA will battle the PDP for supremacy. End comment.

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